GUIDE TO THE AWll KERALA FILE

[The AWll Kerala File is concerned with the peoples and cultures of the State of Kerala in southern India, with particular emphasis on the Nayar caste of Malabar. The file contains 13 sources, all of them in English, ranging in publication date from 1909 to 1963. The principal sources are 1: Gough, 6: Fawcett, 9: Iyer, and 13: Thurston and Rangachari. 1: Gough, by an ethnologist, is an analysis of the traditional Nayar kinship system - the data being supplemented by 2: Gough on the Central Kerala Nayar and 3: Gough on the North Kerala Nayar. 6: Fawcett is a general survey of the Malabar Nayars, concentrating on physical anthropology, subsistence and material culture. 9: Iyer is a general survey of the Nayar caste by an Indian anthropologist. 13: Thurston and Rangachari, the oldest source processed, is another survey of the Nayar by Indian government anthropolologists. 4: Gough and 7: Gough present data on Nayar cults on the dead and female initiation rites. 5: Mehra discusses Nayar snake worship; 8: Panikkar describes some aspects of Nayar life; and 10: Nakane analyzes the Nayar family in the context of its disintegrating matrilineal system. 11: India presents background social and technical data on the State of Kerala as a whole, and 12: Peter gives an extended analysis of Nayar polyandry.

As indicated, the emphasis in the file is on the Nayar caste, and more especially on the functions of the institution of polyandry within the caste. Thus, the file is strong on materials relating to Nayar

social organization, but relatively weak in the coverage of other aspects of culture. In addition, there is the problem of focus; most of the material again is on the Nayar, but there is also material on other castes and groups within the state of Kerala. This should be taken account of when making comparisons.

A number of marking decisions have been made for this file. Among them are: 634 and 635 are used for different kinds of units depending on whether the reference is to modern or historical political subdivisions of Kerala; vamsham (iilam), either patrilineal clans or matrilineal descent groups, have been placed in category 614; the taravad (patrilineal and matrilineal clans) have generally been placed in category 613, but sometimes also in 614 and 592 depending upon the context; the tali-tying ceremony for a pre-pubescent girl has been placed in Category 588. The file was processed between the years 1955 and 1969].